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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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***DECEMBER DECLARED ‘HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS’ MONTH***  
***Annual Tree Lighting Featured Arizona Foster Children, Families***

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano today declared December “Hope for the Holidays” Month. This special declaration is an effort to raise awareness of the 9,000 youths in the Arizona foster care system. The Governor read the proclamation during the annual lighting of the Holiday Tree to an audience of foster children and representatives from foster and adoption supporter agencies.

“All children deserve and benefit from the love of a family,” the Governor said. “It is our responsibility to ensure the safety, permanency and well being of the 9,000 children in foster care statewide.”

To complement today’s dedication, the Governor has also taken several steps to ensure that the foster care system in Arizona will receive more attention from private industry and the faith-based community. These steps include: asking businesses to increase awareness and urge support of foster children, and to encourage them to become foster parents. Additionally, Governor Napolitano has sent a letter of thanks to every licensed foster family in Arizona, in appreciation for what these families do for the state of Arizona and for its future.

More information regarding the Governor’s “Hope for the Holidays” program can be found at <http://www.azgovernor.gov/holidayhope>.